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ABSTRACT

This 2-week unit uses visuals of a recent space walk as the basis for an introductory study of the nature of language. The aims of the unit are (1) to show pupils how language operates, (2) to stimulate awareness of the importance of basic language skills, (3) to develop an increased desire in using language effectively, and (4) to acquaint teacher and pupils with the needs, interests, and English abilities of the class. The first day's study begins with the writing of alternatives to Neil Armstrong's "Great leap for mankind" speech. This is fcllowed by a study of the wording of the plaque left on the moon by the crew of Apollo 11 and culminated in role playing by students of the first American landing on Mars. In following lessons, students study the role of persona and audience in written composition, write their own reactions to space travel, and do exercises dealing with appropriateness in language usage. (DD)

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Establishing A Framework For the Study of English

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DURING THE FIRST two weeks of the term the teacher tries to establish with the class a frame of reference for the work that will be done during the year. This procedure is especially important in the case of slower and reluctant learners who generally lack incentive and rationale for studying English.

The pupils should be led to see some purposes for their English work through their understanding of the nature of the language and how it operates. Much time should be spent, as well, on making the pupils aware of their need to develop their abilities to use language effectively; much opportunity, therefore, should be provided for generally uncensored oral and written expression.

In this unit detailed suggestions are provided for the first day's lesson to indicate recommended procedures and direction. Other activities follow that may vary in length and operation according to the abilities and interests of the pupils involved. All activities are suggestive in nature and are designed to further the development of the following unit aims:

1. To show pupils how language operates—that there is a need for language expression and the expression is determined by the purpose, situation, and audience.
2. To stimulate on the part of the pupils an awareness of the importance of basic language skills.
3. To develop in the pupils a desire to increase in their ability to use language effectively.

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4. To acquaint both the teacher and the pupils with some of the needs, interests, and English abilities of the class.

First Day (To give pupils an opportunity to express themselves and to begin to indicate to them that in a social situation communication takes place in different ways by different people for different purposes.)

Introductory

1. Teacher shows overhead transparency picture of the moon (from recent space walk experience) and asks pupils to look at it for about 30 seconds and be ready to tell the first thing that comes to their minds.
   - Several pupils are asked for their immediate reactions – "What did you think or feel when you saw the picture?"
   - Teacher lists some responses on the board.
2. Teacher recalls for class that when Neil A. Armstrong on July 20, 1969 on the Apollo 11 mission took his first step on the moon he said, "That's one small step for man, one great leap for mankind." The teacher asks pupils what they think Mr. Armstrong meant by the remark.

   The discussion should lead to speculation about what Col. Aldrin might have said.
3. Teacher asks pupils to imagine themselves in shoes of Mr. Armstrong and Colonel Aldrin and what they'd say when they stepped on the moon. The pupils complete the following:

   "As he stepped onto the moon, Colonel Aldrin said . . ."

   - Some pupils write their sentences on the board while the rest do so in their seats.
   - Board sentences are noted and several more are heard to see how many different ideas there are. Teacher identifies different responses by listing on the board:

     Colonel Aldrin #1 " – – – – – – –"
     Colonel Aldrin #2 " – – – – – – –"
     Colonel Aldrin #3 " – – – – – – –"

   He helps pupils reach the conclusion that different people express themselves in different ways.

Development

1. The teacher shows a picture of the American flag and plaque that had been placed on the moon and reminds the class that the

plaque reads as follows: "Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the moon, July 1969 A.D. We came in peace for all of mankind."

- Pupils are asked why a plaque would be left. They should be led to see that a written message can stand as a record of the time and place when the event took place.
- It can also indicate to others who read the plaque or hear what was written that this country felt was important to say upon the occasion: "We came in peace for all of mankind . . ."
- Class is led to speculate on why people in our government wanted to make such a statement:
  Who might have composed it? For what purpose?
  Who did they figure would read it? (on moon *and* all over the world in newspapers, TV, etc.)

2. Pupils should begin to see that language use depends upon the speaker, the audience, and purpose for use.
   U.S.– – – – – – "Message" – – – – – – Other Countries
   (Purpose?) of the world

3. Teacher shows latest picture of Mars and asks what NASA has been doing to bring these pictures to us. He also indicates that V.P. Agnew had said after the moon walk in July that he thinks Mars might well be next.
   - Pupils are asked to imagine that they are the astronauts who are to land on Mars.
   - Three pupils are selected to act as astronauts who, after five months of traveling to Mars, get set to explore Mars. One stays on the command module and the other two walk on the planet. They are asked to prepare for the landing and their walk.
     The rest of the class is assigned to write a couple of sentences to go on the plaque that the three astronauts will leave on Mars when they play their parts.

Culminating Activities

1. Several plaque statements are heard and one is selected for the astronauts to use for the play. The teacher indicates that he's interested in reading all the plaque statements and collects them for use the next day.
2. Pupils role play the Mars walk. They use the plaque statement in their act.

Second and Third Days

Suggested Activities

1. Teacher reads aloud some of the pupils' statements of what might go on the Mars' plaque and comments on how interesting he has found them to be.
   He distributes a dittoed sheet containing several statements. Pupils are encouraged to explain their statements. Other pupils are encouraged to comment and ask questions. The questions discussed "Are these appropriate statements for the government of the United States to make for the entire world to read? Why?"
2. Teacher points out that no two statements are exactly alike. This is normal since each was composed by a different person. The statements are similar but not identical.
3. Pupils examine a list of statements that might be made about moon and space exploration. They try to decide who might be expected to make each statement by matching statement with the following people: (a) teacher, (b) mother, (c) child, (d) old man, (e) artist, (f) baseball player, (g) politician, (h) scientist, (i) successful business man, (j) clergyman.

   Statements

   1. Now we'll know what kind of cheese the moon is made of.
   2. That's great! They're real he-men!
   3. This certainly proves the strength of our great country and that we're spending our money properly.
   4. Boy, I bet I could hit a ball pretty far on the moon.
   5. I wonder how it will be to raise children on the moon.
   6. It just shows what people can do if they read books, study hard, and keep working.
   7. Who would believe when I was growing up that people some day would travel in space?
   8. This helps to prove the well founded equation of $E=MC^2$.
   9. If only this beauty could be captured forever.
   10. Let's hope the nations of the world will be stimulated to live together in peace and brotherhood.
4. Pupils are led to see that we expect certain responses from certain people. Just as the pupils' own statements were somewhat different, these statements would be quite different because of the people making them (age, sex, education, experience, kind of work . . .).

5. Pupils role play by acting the part of an inquiring reporter and specified people.

   "Mr. _____, should space exploration be continued?"

   a) Miss Brown, teacher
   b) Dr. Fred Surgeon, head of hospital
   c) Mrs. L. Lewis, social worker
   d) Mr. J. Vladmir, a Russian citizen
   e) Professor A. Seeker, scientist
   f) Mr. Buck Taxis, business man

   Pupils note responses to judge whether the statements made correspond to the people making them.

Fourth Day

1. In order to indicate how different people have reacted to space exploration –
   - Show transparencies of cartoons from Dick Tracy comic strip. The cartoonist reacted this way to the idea of space exploration. ("Moon Maid," etc.)
   - Ask class if anyone knows the name of a person who used his imagination over 100 years ago and wrote books about space exploration: Jules Verne, *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) Portions may be read.
   - Play record of sound track to *Space Odyssey* or *Claire de Lune:* (Can you tell by listening to the music something about how Debussey felt?)
   - Have pupils read a reporter's newspaper account of a mission.

     Who might be writing? For whom? For what purpose?
2. Pupils should be helped in a summary to see that people react in different ways to different situations for a variety of reasons.

Who?	*Why?*	*For whom?*
a) Reporter	To tell what happened (inform)	Newspaper, radio TV audiences
b) Composer	To express his mood about moon and space	Music listeners
c) Jules Verne	To imagine in story form what might occur. To entertain	Book readers
d) Cartoonist	To entertain	Comic strip readers

Fifth Day (in which pupils are asked their reactions to space travel for themselves)

1. A contest is simulated in which pupils are asked to discuss and then to write on either topic:
   - For a number of reasons, I'd like to be the first pupil from school # _____ to go to the moon.
   - For a number of reasons, I would not like to be the first pupil from school # _____ to go to the moon.
2. With the writing of the above paragraphs by the pupils, the teacher is in a position to begin introducing some writing improvement work. The desirability of writing for a particular purpose and audience continues to be stressed.

Sixth and Seventh Days

1. Have some reading of "contest paragraphs" to see how many reasons are given for wanting or not wanting to go to the moon.
2. Project a successful landing on Mars in which it is discovered that people there speak English as we do (Amazing!). Have pupils choose appropriate responses or statements according to audience.

   Example:

   Which of the following speeches would you make to a city mayor on Mars? To a teenager?

   –Gee, this is real cool.

   –Sir, I am very much impressed by your life here.
3. Bring pupils back to earth to note that we have problems of language choices right here in the United States. Use the following exercises to point up concept of appropriateness in language use.*
4. Conduct short drills on common usage errors such as (did, done) (seen, saw) which may have been shown on pupils' papers or in their speech.
5. Begin writing improvement work with one problem only that manifested itself on the compositions.
6. Help pupils set a few limited goals for language work during the year.

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